

Until late 2006, training for the National Police was not standardized, and it focused largely on counterinsurgency and paramilitary operations. In October 2006, the Coalition removed the entire 8th Brigade of the 2nd National Police Division from operations and arrested its officers, who were implicated in the kidnapping of 26 Sunnis and the death of 7 of those individuals. This incident made clear the need for standardized training and reorientation of the National Police. Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq launched the National Police Transformation Program, which in its initial stages included limited vetting and three weeks of traditional police training—the first police training that any members of the National Police had received.

The National Police Headquarters, in cooperation with the Civilian Police Assistance Transition Team, now operates three major training facilities. New recruits undergo six weeks of basic training at the National Police Academy in Numinayah. Basic, officer, and noncommissioned officer training is offered at Camp Solidarity, located in northern Baghdad. Finally, more specialized training, such as SWAT (special weapons and tactics) training and Emergency Response Unit training, is offered at Camp Dublin, just south of Baghdad. The Civilian Police Assistance Transition Team started a mandatory four-week training course to address concerns about National Police activities after the 8th Brigade was taken out of operations. This process, sometimes referred to as “re-bluing,” is a month-long basic training program in policing skills, such as human rights training and policing in a democracy, as well as tactical training, such as patrolling and checkpoint operation.¹⁶⁹ All nine National Police brigades will have completed the re-bluing training by early October 2007.

Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq and Multi-National Corps–Iraq provide important technical advice, training, and mentoring to the National Police. The Civilian Police Assistance Transition Team plays a key role in National Police training and capacity building within the MOI to support the National Police. Multi-National Corps–Iraq is responsible for 41 National Police Transition Teams, 38 of which are partnered with National Police battalions, as well as 2 teams that are partnered with the division headquarters, and 1 team assisting National Police Headquarters. Fourteen international police advisors work with the National Police. The National Police Transition Teams work with National Police units on a daily basis, providing mentoring and assistance in the field. A major recent focus for the Civilian Police Assistance Transition Team and the National Police Transition Teams has been implementing the first two phases of the four-phase National Police Transformation Program. Under Phase 1, the National Police Transition Teams conducted technical inspections of each of the National Police battalions to identify deficiencies in areas such as personnel accountability, uniforms, fuel supplies, spare parts, and maintenance capabilities. The teams also conducted quick-look inspections and command climate surveys to get a more qualitative assessment of the National Police units.

Challenges for the National Police

The National Police is the subject of considerable concern both inside and outside Iraq. The Commission was struck by the almost universally negative descriptions of the National Police

¹⁶⁹ “Department of Defense Bloggers Roundtable with Colonel Mark R. French,” http://www.defenselink.mil/home/blog/docs/20070730_French_Transcript.pdf.

voiced by Iraqi police, Army officers, and members of the general public. The National Police has been regularly accused of sectarian abuse and illegal activities. Reports of Iraqi security forces' involvement in death squad activities have most frequently been traced to this organization, particularly its former commando units.¹⁷⁰ Members of the National Police were also heavily implicated in the 2005 prisoner torture scandal, and the most recent former Commanding General of Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq, Lieutenant General Martin Dempsey, remarked in late 2006 that “the National Police is the biggest worry, about 20 to 25 percent of them probably need to be weeded out.”¹⁷¹ The Commission also observed that the Coalition’s sheer need for large numbers of security forces to bring the fight to al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and the militias may be hindering its ability to consider, in partnership with the Government of Iraq, what makes the most sense for the future of the National Police.

***Finding:** In its current form, the National Police is not a viable organization. Its ability to be effective is crippled by significant challenges, including public distrust, sectarianism (both real and perceived), and a lack of clarity about its identity—specifically, whether it is a military or a police force.*

Sectarianism

National Police members are largely recruited from Baghdad and the largely Shi’a southern provinces of Iraq. Efforts to recruit Sunni men into the National Police have generally been unsuccessful. As a result, the National Police force is 85 percent Shi’a, 13 percent Sunni, and 2 percent other affiliations; given its composition and past activities, it is widely perceived as highly sectarian.

In an effort to curb sectarian behavior, the National Police Commander has recently replaced 8 of 9 brigade commanders and 17 of 27 battalion commanders—but serious perception problems remain. As part of the Baghdad Security Plan that began in February 2007, two National Police battalions were supposed to deploy to Baghdad, one from the northern part of Iraq and another from the Tikrit/Samarra region, but ultimately political resistance prevented their transfer.¹⁷²

The Commission heard police chiefs and senior police officials describe the National Police as “very sectarian,” “making daily mistakes with the Iraqi people,” “a burden on the MOI,” and “not a national force at all.” Even with the re-bluing training largely completed, sectarianism in the National Police may still be more than just a perception problem. The MOI is seeking to establish an additional National Police brigade in Samarra; but while the National Police leadership has proposed that its composition be 45 percent Sunni and 55 percent Shi’a, the Office of the

¹⁷⁰ Olga Olikier, “Iraqi Security Forces: Defining Challenges and Assessing Progress,” testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, 110th Cong., 1st sess., March 28, 2007, p. 5; available at www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/2007/RAND_CT277.pdf.

¹⁷¹ U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, *Stand Up and Be Counted: The Continuing Challenge of Building the Iraqi Security Forces*, 110th Cong., 1st sess., July 2007, pp. 87–88.

¹⁷² CPATT briefing, July 2007.

Commander in Chief (which reports directly to the Prime Minister) has proposed that the personnel be 1 percent Sunni and 99 percent Shi'a.¹⁷³

Quality

The National Police faces many of the same challenges in maintaining quality forces as do the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police Service. For example, the National Police struggles to ensure that sufficient personnel are present for duty; the existence of ghost payrolling also complicates determinations of present-for-duty numbers at any given time. And like the other forces, the National Police faces a shrinking pool of quality recruits, it lacks sufficient leaders and noncommissioned officers, and it does not have an effective logistics system.

Of the approximately 25,000 National Police authorized by the MOI, on average only about 65 percent are actually present for duty on a given day. While a handful of National Police units are assigned a full complement of personnel, only two of these units have more than 80 percent of their assigned personnel present for duty.

Meetings with Civilian Police Assistance Transition Team officials highlighted additional quality concerns regarding the National Police. The pool of sufficiently high quality recruits is shrinking; identifying literate recruits has become a big challenge. In 2007 the replenishment goal for the National Police is 14,000 recruits—more than half of the entire standing National Police force. Unless this replenishment goal is an aberration, the high percentage of new recruits annually will make it hard to maintain the quality of the National Police over time. The absence of sufficient leaders is another serious concern for the National Police, where officer strength is less than 45 percent of what is authorized by the MOI. Like the Iraqi military, the National Police does not have noncommissioned officers, who could assume some of the leadership responsibilities in the organization. Finally, like the Iraqi military and Iraqi Police Service, the National Police lacks a functioning logistics or supply chain management system. As a result, the National Police struggles to maintain and repair equipment, and its operational readiness is degraded.

Future Missions and Command and Control Arrangements

There is considerable debate within the Coalition and in the broader defense community about the future of the National Police. Should it be a light infantry, a counterinsurgency force, or a civil police force? The National Police has largely been trained as a counterinsurgency force, although the Phase 2 re-bluing training places much greater emphasis on traditional police activities and includes a focus on human rights and the rule of law. At the same time, Phase 3 training under the National Police Transformation Plan is centered on a 90-day course with an emphasis on counterinsurgency operations. Presentations from Iraqis on the future of the National Police tended to emphasize “preventing rebellions,” undertaking counterterrorism operations, and preventing the movement and activities of militias.¹⁷⁴ The lack of clarity surrounding the National Police mission is

¹⁷³ CPATT briefing, July 2007.

¹⁷⁴ Meetings with Iraqi National Police officials, July 2007.

further reflected in how the National Police is equipped. An American general noted that “we ask the National Police to fight as Iraqi Army, but they are equipped like regular police.”

Command and control arrangements for the National Police are part of the broader debate about this organization’s future. Some argue that the MOI needs a set of security forces under its control that can deploy nationwide, but the National Police is not well-embedded in the ministry. There are five deputy ministers in the MOI, one of whom is responsible for security, including the provincial police—but this deputy minister is not responsible for the National Police. The National Police commander reports directly to the Minister, an arrangement that may, whether fairly or unfairly, fuel perceptions of sectarianism. Others argue that the National Police is essentially composed of soldiers, not police, and should be brought under the Ministry of Defense. Senior police officials noted that under the Baghdad Security Plan, the National Police in Baghdad are already under the operational control of the Ministry of Defense.

Recommendation: *The National Police should be disbanded and reorganized under the MOI. It should become a much smaller organization under a different name with responsibility for highly specialized police tasks such as explosive ordnance disposal, urban search and rescue, special threat action, and other similar functions.*

Although the National Police cannot be effective in their current form, there is a need for the Ministry of Interior to have a security force under its control that can augment provincial police forces when necessary. The MOI, with support from the Civilian Police Assistance Transition Team, should dissolve the National Police and draw on a portion of its former personnel to establish a network of National Emergency Support Teams (NESTs), with one team in each province. To avoid many of the problems with the current National Police, NEST units should be ethnically and religiously diverse and should reflect the population makeup of their provinces.

These NEST teams would focus on providing capabilities to the police forces in each province that are necessary but too specialized in most instances to be maintained at the local level—for example, explosive ordnance disposal; consequence management for chemical, biological, nuclear, or radiological events; urban search and rescue; air support; marine/riverine patrol; and civil disturbance response. To sustain the high level of capabilities associated with these specialized missions, NEST teams would require specialized training and equipment similar to that available to the existing national-level Emergency Response Unit.

The NEST teams, while provincially based, could be deployed nationally if an area of the country needed substantial infusions of specialized capability. If deploying to assist the Iraqi Police Service, provincial NEST teams should come under the authority of the local police commander.

The existing national-level Emergency Response Unit in the National Police contains 600 personnel. The Civilian Police Assistance Transition Team personnel spoke highly of the ERU and indicated that it was a very competent organization. If each province were to have a NEST team of about 300 people, the overall size of the NEST network would be about 6,000 personnel—only 25 percent of the existing National Police force. Former National Police personnel that did not remain as part of the NEST forces could be readily absorbed into the Iraqi Army or the Iraqi Police Service. In light of the sectarian problems that have plagued the National Police, it would be important to

ensure that all former National Police members seeking to transfer to the Iraqi Army or Iraqi Police Service are sufficiently vetted prior to being accepted into either of those organizations.

Conclusion: The National Police have proven operationally ineffective. Sectarianism in its units undermines its ability to provide security; the force is not viable in its current form. The National Police should be disbanded and reorganized.